

The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art Announces New Acquisitions

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Press Kit

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Cleveland (June 27, 2022)—Recent acquisitions by the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) include a contemporary painting by Carmen Herrera, a groundbreaking artist who worked for decades and achieved fame very late in life; a very rare Korean knife sheath from the Goryeo dynasty, celebrated as the golden age of sophisticated artistry; two alabaster apostle statues that build on the museum's strength in medieval art; and a painted Andean drum, an exceedingly rare object in excellent condition from 500–1000.

Carmen Herrera's *Mardi Soir*

The CMA acquires a contemporary painting by a woman of color who achieved fame very late in life and whose reputation is now soaring

In its palette and striking formal qualities, *Mardi Soir* [2] is a quintessential Carmen Herrera painting, with the benefit of being slightly larger than the canvas size she typically used, making the work extremely rare; it is among the most important examples of her historic paintings.

The saturated cobalt-blue hue used in this acrylic on canvas painting is powerful, and typical of the jewel-toned palette that the artist frequently offset with black or white to create rhythmic compositions. The zig-zag pattern of *Mardi Soir* is indicative of the dynamism of her forms and suggests movement beyond the painting's edges, reinforced by the fact that the artist painted the edges of the canvas. This detail entices viewers to move back and forth in front of the painting, activating the three-dimensional space that connects viewer to object, and encouraging multiple vantage points. This factor highlights the flat, intersection of planes, and the painting's strong optical effect. In this way, Herrera dissolved the two-dimensionality of the picture plane by infusing movement into her forms.

Born in Cuba, Herrera began painting abstract works in the 1940s before spending time in Paris, and finally settling in New York in the 1950s, where she honed what would become her trademark minimalist aesthetic. Her signature, angular forms blossomed in the 1960s and 1970s, and she continued working in a similar vein until her death. Herrera's paintings from this period are the most highly prized by museums and collectors today.

Although a groundbreaking artist who worked for decades, with formal forays remarkably ahead of her male counterparts in the Minimalist and Concrete art movements, Herrera's work was underappreciated for much of her life. Largely due to her gender, Herrera did not achieve commercial success until she was in her 90s, and her first major museum retrospective occurred at the age of 100.

Given her belated success, few historic paintings by the artist survive. ***Mardi Soir***, however, was saved in the artist's personal collection until her death at the age of 106 in 2022.

Mardi Soir, 1973. Carmen Herrera (American, born Cuba, 1915-2022). Acrylic on canvas; 106.7 x 162.6 cm (42 x 64 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund, 2022.39 ^[2]

Knife Sheath

Rare 12th-century object is among the best of its kind from the celebrated Korean Goryeo dynasty

In Korean art, the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) is celebrated as the golden age of sophisticated artistry. Due to frequent foreign invasions and Korea's modern colonial history, many Goryeo period artworks were lost or destroyed. The gilt-silver ***Knife Sheath*** ^[3] is among the finest surviving examples from this period and is only one of about ten well-preserved 12th-century Goryeo period knife sheaths known to exist today.

Made by rolling a flat piece of silver plate, the ***Knife Sheath*** has an opening with a vent on one side, designed to allow for the easy removal and replacement of a knife. The sheath comes with a trefoil-shaped ring at the top, which would have allowed the object to be worn as a pendant attached to a belt. Such an object would have been an important fashion item, alluding to the wearer's high social and political status.

The ***Knife Sheath*** is decorated on each side with oval panels, including two larger middle panels, each with an image of rising dragons with ring-punched scales. The upper circular panels are decorated with seated phoenixes within borders of fine, narrow petals and separated by bands of scrolls of flowers. The flat end of the sheath is engraved with a pair of fish, symbolizing harmonious unity.

This 12th-century ***Knife Sheath*** will be displayed in the center of the CMA's Korean gallery, highlighted as a singular object that emblemizes the sophisticated artistry of metal works during the Goryeo dynasty.

Knife Sheath, 1100s. Korea, Goryeo dynasty (918–1392). Gilt silver (body) and brass (trefoil-shaped ring); l. 21.7 cm (8 9/16 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, J. H. Wade Trust Fund, 2022.38 ^[3]

Two Standing Apostles

Early 15th-century acquisitions build on the CMA's strength in medieval art

The ***Two Standing Apostles*** ^[4] statues show two men at different ages which according to medieval conventions can be identified as Saint Paul (the older) and Saint John the Evangelist (the younger). The two sculptures were recently attributed to a cycle of apostles from the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Saint-Omer in northern France. They were part of an altarpiece most likely with the crucified Christ in the center. The apostles have lost their attributes and respective hands but are among the few examples of alabaster sculpture from the 1400s in which the original surface has been well preserved.

Within the CMA's collection, the ***Two Standing Apostles*** complement works of art from Burgundy and the Netherlands in the first half of the 15th century. The Apostles are quintessential examples of the most exquisite work of the so-called International Gothic style of the early 1400s. Their display in the gallery of Gothic painting and sculpture (gallery 109) will enable the museum to communicate an important facet of late medieval art to visitors, when sculpture was the leading artistic genre. This changed dramatically when shortly after artists such as Jan van Eyck and the Master of Flémalle (Robert Campin) appeared, whose work is represented at the CMA with a small but important panel painting, Saint John the Baptist (1966.238).

The ***Two Standing Apostles*** will be featured in an upcoming exhibition that opens in the Julia and Larry Pollock Focus Gallery on March 26, 2023.

Two Standing Apostles (probably Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Paul), c. 1430. Master of the St. Omer Apostles (Northern France / Netherlands, Bruges? (today's Belgium), active c. 1410–30). Alabaster; overall: 23.7 x 9.3 x 5.8 cm (9 5/16 x 3 11/16 x 2 5/16 in.); overall: 23.7 x 10.2 x 5.9 cm (9 5/16 x 4 x 2 5/16 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Severance and Greta Millikin Purchase Fund, 2022.41.1–2 ^[4]

Painted Drum

Andean drum is an exceedingly rare art object of perishable materials from 500–1000

At the time of the conquest, music was so important to Indigenous Andean ceremonial life that the Spaniards destroyed thousands of musical instruments to hasten the Natives' conversion to Christianity. It is exceedingly rare for an object made of perishable materials like the ***Painted Drum*** ^[5] to survive from 500–1000.

In antiquity, both men and women played drums. The small size of the ***Painted Drum*** may signal that it belonged to a woman, as did small drums among the later Inka. The excellent preservation of the painted surfaces implies that the drum was played sparingly, if at all; it may have served solely as a ceremonial object, such as a funerary offering. Painted on one face, against a swirling ground of stepped motifs, is an unidentified figure whose large crescent headdress was an emblem of divine rulership in the

subsequent Chimú period; its shape may refer to the moon, a major coastal deity, or to the blade of a knife (tumi) associated with high status.

Except for a small, earlier gold flute, the CMA's collection contains no Andean musical instruments. The **Painted Drum** will make an important contribution by representing a key category of Andean art production and cultural emphasis.

Painted Drum, 500–1000. Central Andes, Middle Horizon, North Coast? Animal hide, gesso, wooden slats, pigment; overall: 27 x 28 x 12 cm (10 5/8 x 11 x 4 3/4 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Severance and Greta Millikin Purchase Fund, 2022.37 [5]

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [6].

Press Announcements [7]

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